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BAPTISM
THE SACRAMENT OF
REGENERATION.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE HOLY CROSS CHURCH,

LOCKEPORT, N. S.,

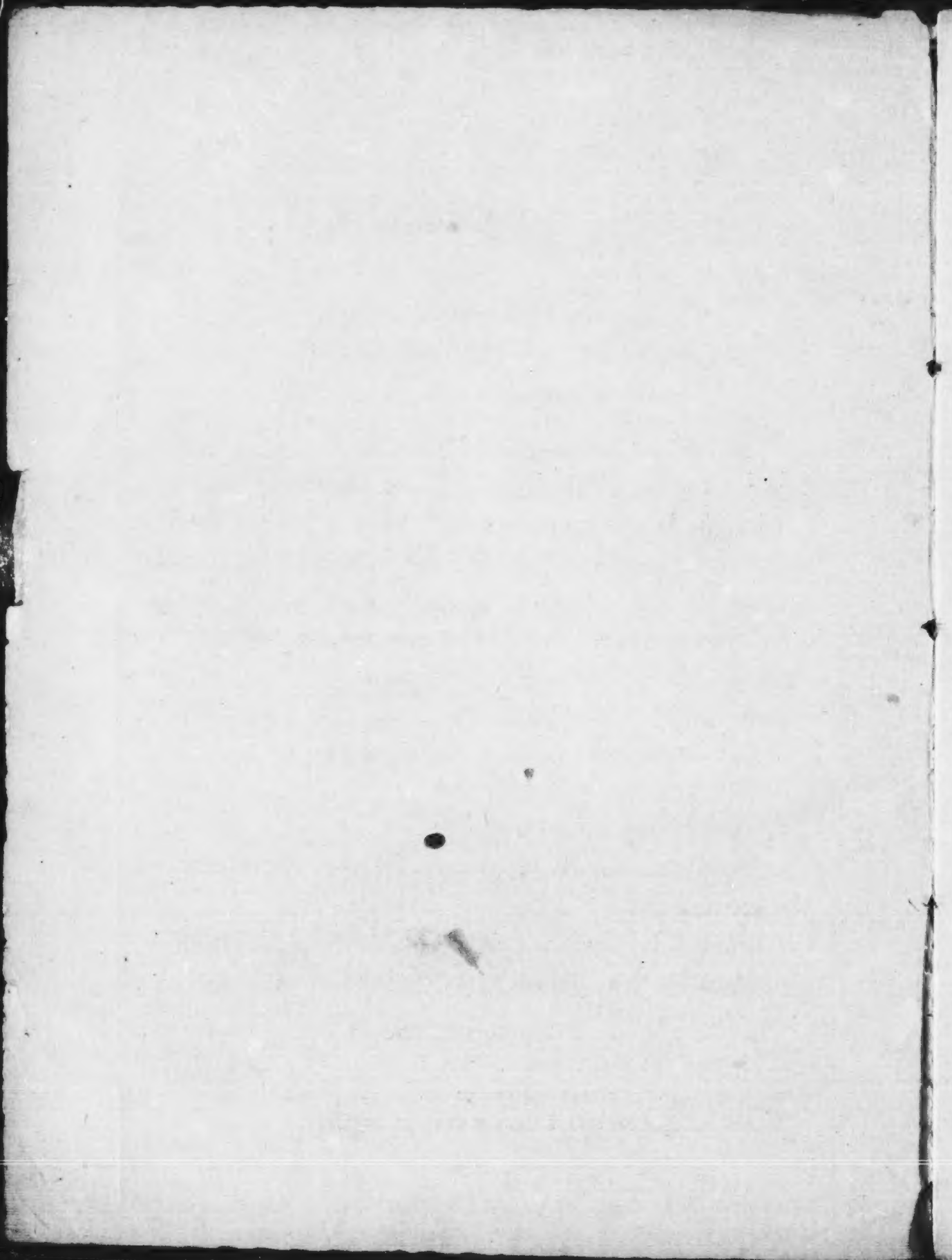
ON EVENING OF FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

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SERMON.

Titus iii, 5.

*"He saved us by the WASHING OF REGENERATION
and renewing of the Holy Ghost."*

"Is it not dreadful to think the Church people believe a child is 'converted' in Baptism?" It is to dissipate such ignorance as the asking of such a question implies, that I have resolved during the Lenten fast, to set plainly before you certain *teachings* about different phases of Conversion. We must never forget that the principal duty of the pulpit is to *teach*. *St. Matt. xxviii, 20 ; Malachi ii, 7.*

This evening I propose to set before you,

What Regeneration is not :

What Regeneration is :

What is actually necessary for the Sacrament of Regeneration :

For whom this Sacrament was designed : and

How the Sacrament is to be administered :

In the first place let me say, the Church does not and never has believed that a little child is converted in Holy Baptism. Conversion implies a change from a life of sin ; therefore conversion is impossible in infancy.

"But you say in your Baptismal service, 'Seeing now that this child is regenerated,' does not Regenerated mean converted?" Now-a-days, among those who do not speak with Theological precision it does, but it does not mean so in our Prayer Book, nor in the New Testament, nor in any writer over 300 years ago. Our Prayer Book is substantially the same as that put forth in 1552, since which time many words have changed their meaning. The word Regeneration is now generally used to mean "conversion", or "change of heart," a good meaning for it, but it had another meaning before, which the Church has held to. When a sinner is converted, he may be truly said to be *born from above* (for such is the literal translation from the Greek). But the word Regeneration never meant this in the olden time. Ancient writers invariably use the phrase, as St. Paul does in our text (*Titus* iii, 5), for the blessings resulting from admission into the Church by baptism. Our natural birth admits us into Adam's family—Baptism, like a new birth admits us into God's family. In the Prayer Book, the two ideas of Regeneration and Conversion are kept carefully distinct—Regeneration meaning admission into the Church of God by Baptism; Conversion the turning from wickedness to God.

WHAT REGENERATION IS NOT.

When *we* use the word Regeneration, we do not mean conscious or active co-operation on man's part with the Holy Spirit; we do not mean "a struggle with sin, ending in assurance of peace." *We* do not mean self-condemnation, abhorance of sin and penitence; we do not mean implanting of new habits by which what *was* a mass of corruption becomes a spiritual man with formed habits of Religion. We do not mean a visible change, felt in a moment and wrought amid excitement of high strung feeling and much

human persuading. We do not mean such a gift of the Holy Spirit as necessarily implies continued advancement and final perseverance. If the Church meant any of these things by Regeneration, we could not look upon them as the effect of Holy Baptism. We acknowledge that some of the above are included in Conversion and in Renewal, two processes which we keep distinct from Regeneration.

WHAT REGENERATION IS.

Regeneration is that spiritual change by which we are translated from a state of wrath (*Eph. ii, 3*) to a state of grace (*Titus iii, 5*) and covenant with God, wrought by the Holy Spirit, once for all.

Baptism is connected with Remission of Sins in three places—*Acts ii, 38*; *Acts xxii, 16*; *Ephes. v, 26*. With Salvation in 3 places—*Mark xvi, 16*; *Titus iii, 5*; *I Peter iii, 21*. With mystical burial with Christ in two places—*Rom. vi, 1-4*; *Colos. ii, 12*.

Our Catechism declares that in Baptism we are made *members of Christ* (engrafting), *children of God* (adoption), and *inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven* (heirship). St. Paul says, "as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"—*Gal. ii, 27*. For His sake God accounts us as His children, and if children then heirs—heirs with God and joint heirs with Christ (*Rom. viii, 17*). Once baptized into Christ He is our father, and once a father always a father. The children may be sinful, rebellious and very disobedient—yet they are His children to whom His promises are made, and who claim His blessings as covenanted gifts.

Regeneration is more than an outward act. It is the stamping of an image, the imparting of the gift of the Holy Ghost, as a seed sown; but it does not follow that every seed

sown grows, any more than that every Israelite who crossed the Red Sea arrived safely into the land of promise.

"Don't you Church folk believe, then, that every one you baptize is saved?" Certainly not. Putting a man into a state of salvation does not imply his remaining there till the end. In short, Regeneration is birth into God's family, with all consequent privileges and blessings.

"You don't believe, then, that an infant is converted in Holy Baptism?" No. Conversion implies actual sin—a life of unrighteousness. About it we will teach next Sunday night, *D. V.*

"But I don't see any difference between a man who has received the sacrament of Regeneration and one who has not." I dare say you don't. Do you see any difference in the same man after he has been made a Freemason? No—but there is this difference: before he had no *claim* upon masonic charity or privileges or recognition. *After* he has a covenanted interest in every privilege belonging to that body. Let me illustrate what I mean.

"A sailor, born in England, had naturalized himself in the United States. During one of the many insurrections in Hayti he was at Port au Prince, and was seized by the military commander and condemned to be shot as an insurrectionist. The American consul interceded for him as a United States subject, but in vain. Entreaties and threats were used to no purpose. Early next morning he was led forth to be shot. The firing party was ready. Both English and American Consuls appeared with their flags, wrapped his body in their colors, and dared the commander to fire upon the colors of the two greatest nations in the world. The man was saved." He was not born in the United States but he had been naturalized there—he was "born again" there. He was the same man after as before

his naturalization, but those papers gave him a claim upon the United States government. It made him a covenanted child of that Republic. In the same way, by nature we are children of wrath, but by the Sacrament of Regeneration we enter into covenant with God, and He permits us to be His children and to claim his protection.

in Jordan "What is actually necessary for the due administration of this Sacrament?" Water (Christ was baptised in *fresh* water ~~at Enon, near to Salim~~), as the proper element for cleansing, and the name of the Trinity. There are some people who claim for themselves John Baptist's Baptism. They know not what they claim. In Acts xix we find that John's baptism was not into the name of the Trinity and therefore Paul baptized again those who had not received Christian Baptism. If the material (water) and the form (in the name of the Trinity) be wanting, the baptism is deficient.

"For whom was this Sacrament of Regeneration designed?" Who can enter into covenant with God? For whom did Christ die? To whom were the promises made? Whom did Christ order His disciples to baptize?

The sign of admission under the Old Testament dispensation was circumcision for *every* male on the 8th day. Rev. Joseph Parker of the City Temple, London, (not an Episcopalian,) says: "Listen to the covenant: 'He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you.' What an oversight on the part of the Lord not to observe that a child eight days old could not *understand* what it was about? What a waste of piety to baptize an infant of days when it cannot understand what you are doing to it? For myself, let me say that when I baptize a child, I baptize life—human life,—life redeemed by the Son of God. The infant is something more than an infant, it is *humanity*; it is an

heir of Christ's immortality. If there be any who can laugh at an infant and mock its weakness, *they have no right to baptize and consecrate it, and give so mean a thing to God.* God Himself baptizes the great trees, does He ever baptize a daisy? He enriches Lebanon and Bashan with rain, but did He ever hang the dew of the morning upon the shrinking rose? . . . The child does not *understand* the alphabet, do not teach it; the child does not *understand* language, do not teach it; the child does not *understand* the Lord's Prayer, do not teach it. You say the child will *understand* by and by. Exactly so; that answer is good; *and by and by the child will understand that it was baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, three persons in one God.*"

BAPTISM IS ADMISSION INTO COVENANT WITH GOD.

The great question about Infant Baptism is, "Can infants be brought into covenant with God?" Is not God's order plain in *Deut. xxix. vs. 10, 11, 12 (?)*: "You stand this day all of you before the Lord; your captains, &c., your LITTLE ONES, &c., that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into His oath."

This was a covenant, not only to give them the land of Canaan, but "to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." The man's part was "to love the Lord, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments." The covenant of the Ten Commandments was also with infants. Forty years after, Moses said: "The Lord made a covenant with us in Horeb, even with us who are all of us here alive this day." *Deut. v, 2, 3.* Most of these were at that time infants and little children. To Abraham and those who believed, it was "a seal of the righteousness of Faith"; to infants it was a seal of the covenant by which they were

engaged to believe in the true God when they were old enough.

Whom did the Saviour order His disciples to Baptize? All nations. It is gathered from statistics that *two-fifths of every nation are children under seven years of age*. Did the Saviour say baptize three fifths of every nation?

To whom were the promises made? "To you and your children." *Acts ii, 39.*

But infants cannot keep God's law? Cannot they? God says the child of eight days old can break His law (*Gen. 17, 14.*) *How* we do not know, but God says so. What is capable of breaking is capable of keeping. The command to Baptize all nations is not fulfilled by those who would exclude infants from being Baptized, any more than the command to destroy all the Canaanites would have been obeyed (*Deut. vii, 2, 16*) if instead of taking the command literally the Israelites had argued, on independent grounds—that God must have meant *all but the children*.

"But there is no plain command?" Is there a command for keeping Sunday holy? Is there a command for family worship? for Sunday Schools? for women as Communicants?

The Jews *always* included little children in the covenant with God. St. Paul in writing to the Ephesians addresses not only the fathers, mothers and servants, but also the children. The same apostle in *1 Cor. vii, 14*, calls the children "*holy*." Whole households (and according to Greek custom, the household included *slaves* and their *children*) were Baptized *Acts xvi, 16*, (Lydia's) *Acts xvi, 33*, (Jailor) *Acts x*, (Cornelius) *1 Cor. i, 16*, (Stephenas). Is it at all likely that in four households there would be no children. For we read "he and *all* his were Baptized?" Among the Jews, Proselytes and their children were Baptized.

If the admission of children into God's covenant was a thing unheard of, an express command to admit them would have been necessary, but, *as it was the rule*, and Christ did not forbid it, we must believe it His will to admit the children.

Did He forbid the coming of the children? See *Mark x*, 15, 16. He blamed those that would have kept them from Him. He sets the *little child* as a *model—a pattern* for them if they would enter into His Kingdom. Will Christ admit those made like to the pattern and exclude the pattern itself? If they are fit for His Kingdom above, are they not fit to be admitted into His Kingdom on earth, the Church? Is the Christian covenant narrower than the Mosaic dispensation which admitted children of eight days old?

Christ says: "He that *believeth* and is Baptized shall be saved." "Children cannot believe." Perhaps not. But have they not the *germ* of reason? Why not the *germ* of Faith also? The Saviour concludes the verse that you have begun by saying: "he that believeth not, shall be damned"—will any one be foolish enough to say "a child is damned because it has not understanding faith?" "Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." Children cannot repent, shall they therefore perish? "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat?" A child cannot work, shall he therefore not eat?

For 1500 years after Christ, Infant Baptism was practised—and the most learned opponent of Infant Baptism has never yet been able to adduce a particle of credible historical testimony which tells the time and the place where this practice took its rise.

"How is the Sacrament of Baptism to be administered?" Has any particular mode been ordered? Where no order is given liberty is permitted. We acknowledge as legitimate

modes of administering the Sacrament, *immersion* (Rubric in Baptism for Those of Riper Years, says: "Then shall dip him or pour water upon him"), *pouring* or affusion and *sprinkling*. But we do not limit the validity of the Sacrament to one particular mode of administering its outward sign, for we recognize the precise mode in which the outward sign is administered only as a matter of ritual, and no mere matter of ritual is binding upon all, nor can it invalidate the Regenerating Sacrament.

Reference is likely made to immersion in connection with Baptism in Roman 6, 1-4, and Colosians 2, 12. But we cannot believe that it is consistent with the law of Christian liberty to make the blessings of the Sacrament depend upon the *mechanical* method of its administration, nor upon the *quantity* of water used. It certainly is not consistent with analogy that the details of the initiatory Sacrament should be legally arranged any more than those of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and it is a fact that in some "swell" congregations in the neighboring republic where "immersion only" obtains, that a waterproof suit or some other device permits only a small quantity of the *fresh* water used to touch the face of the "immersed." If Baptism be the only means of admission into the visible Church of God, and Baptism by immersion the only valid means of performing the Sacrament, for *hundreds* of years during which immersion was not practiced there could have been no visible Church of God.* This would make Christ's words untrue, for *He* founded *His* Church; with that Church He promised to be always; therefore it must always have been in existence. There *was*, *is* and *ever will be* in the world *His*

*When Roger Williams instituted his Society of Baptists in Rhode Island in 1639, he could not find any *immersed* person to immerse him. So Mr. Ezekiel Holliman (or Hollahan), *not a minister, not immersed, not a member of a Church*, immersed Mr. Williams, then Mr. Williams immersed him.

visible Church. Men may found societies, doing good work for Christ, but *we* always think that the Society founded by Him must be the best, the widest—so wide that it can take in the children of eight days old.

“But does not Baptism always mean immersion in the New Testament?” Certainly not. I can understand a man who has no acquaintance with the language in which the New Testament was mainly written saying this, but I cannot understand this argument being used by the editor of a religious journal without supposing he had forgotten his Greek Testament. Such an argument may do for those who think the New Testament was written in English but not for any one with an unbiased mind and a little knowledge of the Greek in which the Gospels were written. If we can find one place in which the Greek word for baptize cannot mean immerse this argument is quite overthrown. But we can find not *one* but *five* places where the word cannot be rightly translated “immerse.” In St. Mark vii, 2-3-4, we read: “And when they saw some of His disciple eat bread with defiled (that is to say with unwashed hands) they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash (*Greek* baptize) they eat not. And many other things they have received to hold, as the washing (*Greek* baptizing) of cups, and pots and brazen vessels and tables.” In St. Luke xi, 37-38, we are told that a Pharisee marvelled that Christ had not first washed (*Greek* baptized) before dinner. The washings (*Greek* baptisms) were ritual cleansings from legal or ceremonial uncleanness. A Jew did not immerse himself every time he came from the market, and even if the cups and pots were immersed, it was generally impos-

sible to immerse a table twelve or fourteen feet long. If you would know what these baptisms were, and how they were performed, you have only to turn to the Book of Numbers, xix, 18 to end, where the whole ceremony is described as consisting in *sprinkling* water upon the furniture to be cleaned with a bunch of hyssop. For this purpose families were supplied with "waterpots containing two or three firkins apiece." *John* ii, 6.

Another passage where "baptize" cannot be translated immerse is I Cor. x, 1-2. The Apostle says the children of Israel were baptized in the cloud. If we turn to Exodus xiv, 19-20, we learn the cloud changed its position from front to rear. As for immersion in this cloud, it is absurd. The only way in which they could be baptized in it was by its pouring or raining upon them. Thus the baptism here spoken of was by sprinkling.

St. Paul informs us they were baptized in the sea. Many people who do not compare Scripture with Scripture would at once jump to the conclusion, "This certainly means immerse in salt water." *We know better.* In Exodus xiv, 22, we read they went over on *dry* ground; in the 29th verse, "walked upon *dry* ground in the midst of the waters." Though they were not immersed, they were baptized; those who were that day immersed, the Egyptians, were not baptized.

In these five places baptize *cannot* mean immerse. The word *baptize* has a generic meaning, similar to our English word *travel*—we *travel*, whether we journey by water, by foot, or on horseback. A short-sighted *man* might have limited the blessings of the Sacrament of Regeneration to one mode of administration, but the all-knowing Saviour could foresee that a man upon a sick bed, or perhaps a deathbed, could not be *immersed*; is he not to have the sign

of admission into the covenant with God? The Saviour knew that ministers would sometimes suffer from acute diseases which would prevent them from immersing any one desirous of being baptized; are they therefore to remain unbaptized? Can we suppose that the Saviour would institute any such mode of admission into His spiritual Kingdom as could be enjoyed only by those who were favored with good *bodily* health? What has the condition of a man's *mortal body* to do with the salvation of his *immortal spirit*? Baptism is the seal of the covenant and may be applied to every creature whatever the condition of his body.

Baptism with water is emblematical of the work of the Holy Spirit. Does the Scripture ever mention immersing in the Spirit? Let us search the Scriptures and see. In St. Matthew iii, 3, our Saviour promises to baptize His Apostles with the Holy Ghost. How was it done? In Acts ii, 1-4, we see how. In verse 16 we find St. Peter saying the Holy Spirit was "poured out." In Isaiah lii, 15, we read: "So shall He *sprinkle* many nations." In Ezekiel xxxvi, 25: "Then will I *sprinkle* clean water upon you and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols I will cleanse you." In Hebrews x, 22: "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts *sprinkled* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." In I St. Peter i, 2. "Elect through the *sprinkling* of the blood of Jesus Christ." In Proverbs i, 23: "I will *pour out* my spirit upon him." In Joel, ii, 28: "I will *pour out* my spirit." In Acts ii, 17-28: "I will *pour out* my spirit." In Acts x, 45: "On Gentiles also was *poured out* the gift of the Holy Ghost."

In Acts ix, 18, we do not read of Saul's going out of the house in which he was when Ananias baptized him; neither

do we read so of Cornelius in Acts x; nor of the jailor baptized near midnight, in Acts xvi. But In Acts viii, 35-39, we read of the Enoch's *going into* the water. *Into* does not mean *under*. May a person not go *into* the water without being immersed? Moreover the same word which is translated *into* in Acts viii, 38, is translated *unto* in both St. Matthew xxii, 4, and St. John xi, 31.

It must be plain to every unprejudiced person that restricting to one mode or one age the blessings of a Sacrament, made "generally necessary" to Salvation by Jesus Christ is "watering down" His wide, world-embracing covenant to a greater thinness than that of the Mosaic dispensation. For when God first established His Church on earth, he decided for reasons which it does not become us to question, that His Church should be composed of *adults and infants*. By His explicit command little children at the age of eight days (*Gen.* xvii, 12) were to be made members of His Church (*Acts* vii, 38) by receiving the Seal of the Covenant. Are these things so? Search and see. To say that an unconscious child is not a fit subject for membership in the Church of the living God is to accuse the Almighty of folly. The idea of infant membership was not a *suggestion* of Abraham, but a *command* from God.

It may be objected that Christ came to do away with the Mosaic dispensation and all that pertained to it. If we grant this (though He was to do away with it by absorption and improvement, not by annihilation), the claim of this argument is not long enough to reach *Infant* Baptism, for the Church membership of infants was not *Mosaic* but *Abrahamic*, a covenant older than the birth of Moses by 300 years.

Brethren, let us remember, whether our Baptism be *infant* or adult, by immersion or affusion, that in Baptism we are

privileged to enter into covenant with God; that it is the beginning of a covenanted life in the wilderness of the world; that for that life we want helps by the way, and we must obtain them *daily*, under the same conditions imposed upon the Israelites when they—also a covenanted people—were commanded to gather their food day by day, when the freshness of God's dew was upon the ground.

Now, to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, into whose Name we are Baptized, be ascribed all might, majesty and glory, now and forever. Amen.

NOTE.—Some affirm that while the Baptists had no organized Church until the 17th century (1639), yet individuals who held Baptist sentiments were scattered throughout Christendom in early ages, known as Albigenses and Waldenses. The Waldenses were a sect which appeared in the 12th century and had a threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons.